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## BENJAMIN S. PARKER.

THE death of Benjamin S. Parker at his home in Newcastle on the 14th of March has taken from us one of the most honored contributors of this magazine. Mr. Parker has been more widely known for his poetry than for his interest in historical matter, but there are few men in the State who have had a deeper interest in our local history or have done more to advance its study and preservation. He himself has written quite a little on this theme. His articles upon Pioneer Life in each of the four numbers of the Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History of Vol. III, 1907, and his sketches of Pioneer Features in the first number of Vol. IV, 1908, will be recalled by all our readers for their lively description of Central Indiana more than a half century ago. Mr. Parker was born in Henry county, February 10, 1833, and spent most of his life there. He retained a vivid recollection of manners and customs as well as of people. He was vitally interested in everything about him. He never courted popularity or fame, but always showed the most unaffected sympathy with the life about him. He lived in close touch with people, with nature, with places. It was this that made his poetry, though perhaps not great, absolutely genuine and well worth reading. It was this same quality that made him in taste and in influence an historian.

Mr. Parker was one of the promoters of the Henry County Historical Society, our most active county historical organization. The fine building which that society now occupies, its valuable collection of early agricultural and domestic implements, of books, and of other relics, are due probably as much as to his work as to that of any other man. He gave much of his time to these matters. One of the last meetings he attended was the conference of State and local historical societies held in connection with the gathering of the American Historical Society at Indianapolis during the Christmas holidays this winter. Though even then in declining health, he evinced the liveliest interest in the work of his own society and in the meeting of the national association. A few

weeks after his return home he became seriously ill and his death followed a lingering sickness of nearly two months. In the interest which he has stimulated in local history no less than in his writings, both poetry and prose, he has left an enduring legacy.

It is not necessary here to give full account of his long and useful life nor of his many activities. That has been and will be done elsewhere. But a short sketch may not be out of place. His early life was spent on a Henry county farm. Shortly after the Civil War he went into business at Lewisville. He taught school for some time in Henry and Rush counties, speaking frequently at educational, literary and religious gatherings. He studied law at one time but never practiced at the bar. He wrote a good deal for various newspapers, and from 1875 to 1882 was editor of the *Mercury* at Newcastle. He published several small collections of poetry at different times, his first volume, "The Lesson, and Other Poems," appearing in 1871, and his last, "Noontide," in 1905. Perhaps his best known poem was the "Cabin in the Clearing." Some of his work was included in Coggshell's "Poets and Poetry of the West" (1860.) He was the second president of the one-time celebrated Western Association of Writers.

In 1880, Mr. Parker was a Republican elector on the national election, and cast the official vote of his district for Garfield and Arthur. In 1882, he was appointed consul to Sherbrooke, Canada, and remained in office during the administration of Arthur. In 1900, he represented Henry county in the Indiana House of Representatives.